

Nicaragua: UN chief calls on all sides to exercise restraint in wake of protests

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has expressed his concern about the casualties in recent protests in Nicaragua, and called for restraint on all sides.

“He also calls on the Government of Nicaragua to ensure the protection of human rights of all citizens, particularly [the right to peaceful assembly](#) and freedom of expression,” said Mr. Guterres’ Spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric, in a statement issued late Monday.

According to media reports, street demonstrations were triggered by planned changes to Nicaragua’s social security system, and stand-offs between the security forces and protesters resulted in deaths and injuries.

“The Secretary-General supports the call for dialogue as an instrument to address the country’s current challenges,” the Spokesman said.

World leaders gather at UN to renew commitment to build and sustain peace

Calling for more diplomacy, dialogue and mediation to head off conflicts before they break out, United Nations officials urged a gathering of world leaders on Tuesday to help strengthen a new approach to sustaining peace, which aims to put prevention at the heart of the UN’s work.

“The first line of the United Nations Charter commits us to saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war,” UN General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák said in his opening remarks to the [High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace](#), which runs through tomorrow at UN Headquarters in New York.

“In a way, we have met this commitment. There has not, since, been another world war. But, in many other ways, [we have not](#),” he said, noting that a new approach is needed to save people in places of unending conflict, including Syria, South Sudan, Yemen, Libya, Somalia and Afghanistan.

Mr. Lajčák said that in 2016, the UN decided to take a new approach: the

General Assembly, along with the Security Council, adopted what are now known as the 'sustaining peace resolutions,' which renew the world body's commitment to conflict prevention as embodied in the [UN Charter](#).

Two years on, there are challenges in making this approach a reality, he said, calling for greater international attention to the need for scaled-up efforts to prevent conflict, achieve coherence within the UN system, and expand partnerships, financing, and inclusion.

Echoing the Assembly President's view, [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) highlighted the need to strengthen partnerships around all efforts, and at every stage, from conflict prevention and resolution to peacekeeping, peacebuilding and long-term development.

Key partners include Governments, the UN, other international, regional and sub-regional organizations, international financial institutions, the private sector, and civil society, including women's and youth groups, he added.

"[Sustaining peace](#) will only be realized through committed, inclusive national ownership that considers the needs of the most marginalized, including women, young people, minorities and people with disabilities," he said.

The UN chief said that more countries are experiencing violent conflict than at any time in nearly three decades, and that record numbers of people are on the move, displaced by violence, war and persecution.

"Inequalities are increasing; whole regions, countries and communities can find themselves isolated from progress and left behind by growth. These are all indications that we need greater unity and courage – to ease the fears of the people we serve; to set the world on track to a better future; and to lay the foundations of sustainable peace and development," Mr. Guterres stressed.

Jayathma Wickramanayake, UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, called on Member States to increase financing for the peacebuilding work led by youth and see young people as partners in the sustaining peace agenda.

Speakers in the opening session included Michelle Yeoh, an actress and UN Development Programme (UNDP) Goodwill Ambassador, and Ishmael Beah, [UN Children's Fund](#) (UNICEF) Advocate for Children Affected by War.

[New UN-backed action plan promotes hiring of refugees](#)

Launched on Tuesday by the UN refugee agency and the 35-member Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the plan identifies challenges to integrating refugees into the labour market, but also lists

concrete actions to boost their participation.

Volker Türk, the UN agency's Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, [said](#) it supports a "new approach" where refugees are included in communities from the very start and ultimately contribute to local economies.

"This Action Plan shows the way forward to ensure that the economic potential of refugees is fully harnessed, contributing to their social integration and offering a win-win situation to refugees, employers and host communities," he said.

Refugees account for 22.5 million of the more than 65 million people worldwide who have been forcibly displaced from their homes.

The [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) (UNHCR) interviews with refugees found employment and housing as their top concerns, with most saying having a job makes them feel integrated into their new communities.

While receiving countries face major challenges with refugee integration, both in the economy and society, the partners behind the plan believe "refugees also represent a significant opportunity for the host country, given the many skills and aptitudes that they bring."

The Action Plan was based on extensive consultations with employers, trade unions, civil society organizations and others.

It lays out 10 recommendations, such as taking stock of refugees' skills, identifying possible gaps and matching "refugee talent" with employers' needs.

Navigating administrative rules and regulations covering refugees is another area, with public authorities and employment services encouraged to streamline procedures for work permits and other necessary documents.

Employers are also encouraged to make the business case for hiring refugees, for example for jobs that have been difficult to fill.

"Harnessing the full potential of refugees in receiving economies and societies requires a whole of government approach in close partnership with the civil society," said Stefano Scarpetta, OECD's Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs.

"Employers can and should play a central role in this process, but need to be supported by sound policy and actions from other stakeholders, including at the local level. Together we can make the most of refugee skills, talent and potentials."

[Armenia: Welcoming peaceful nature of protests, UN chief asks for continued stability](#)

Following the resignation of Armenia's Prime Minister in the wake of mass protests, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has called for the continued respect of the rule of law and human rights, as well as for the maintenance of peace and stability in Armenia and the wider region.

The Secretary-General has "taken note" of the resignation of Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan, and "welcomes the peaceful nature of the unfolding events and encourages all relevant actors to [continue to exercise restraint](#) and prioritize dialogue," Mr. Guterres' Spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric, said in a statement issued late Monday.

According to media reports, Mr. Sargsyan served as president for a decade before being elected last week as prime minister with sweeping powers.

The co-chairs of a group within the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), namely France, Russia and the United States, has issued an appeal urging all sides to intensify efforts toward a peaceful negotiated solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict involving Armenia and Azerbaijan and to prevent any potential escalations along the line of contact.

The Secretary-General "echoes" this appeal, said the Spokesman.

[A new bond with nature is goal of UN's Mother Earth Day celebration](#)

Harmony with Nature – living a better quality of life while minimizing the use of toxic materials and preserving natural resources – was the focus of the International Mother Earth Day celebration Monday at the United Nations.

"Mother Earth is suffering – and it is our doing," Miroslav Lajčák, President of the General Assembly, told the Eighth [Interactive Dialogue](#) on Harmony with Nature. Climate change, pollution and a [loss of biodiversity](#) "take a toll on human life and health," he said. "But they affect, first and foremost, the Earth."

The [sustainable development](#) that is sought by the world community relies upon the three overarching objectives of devising supportable patterns of consumption and production, protecting and managing natural resources and eradicating poverty.

Mr. Lajčák said that the 2018 theme of the annual Mother Earth Day, “Earth Jurisprudence in the implementation of sustainable production and consumption patterns in Harmony with Nature” was timely, since progress toward Sustainable Development [Goal 12](#) – which calls for responsible production and consumption patterns globally – will be reviewed during a [High-Level Political Forum](#) in July.

Earth Jurisprudence is an emerging field of law that seeks to give greater consideration to nature, promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns.

Pointing to droughts and floods, poverty and excess, rising sea levels and dwindling fresh water, the General Assembly President, who is from Slovakia, stressed that humanity has not yet struck a harmonious balance.

“Our Earth is home to these extremes,” he said. “It will only get worse if we do not change the way we produce and consume goods – especially as our population grows.”

“And if our population grows as predicted, by 2050 we will need about three planets to sustain our current lifestyles. But we only have one,” stressed Mr. Lajčák. “And this is why we really need to take care of it. We have neither a Plan B nor a Planet B.”

“To achieve our Sustainable Development Goals, we have to change our bad habits,” he maintained, urging everyone to take action and redouble their efforts for Mother Earth.

“Living in harmony with nature is not just beneficial. It is necessary,” Mr. Lajčák concluded.